

Written Copy: Mark 16:6-8 “A Very Uncomfortable Ending?”

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Easter Sunday, April 4th, 2021 (8:00 AM and 10:00 AM)

Text: Mark 6:6-8

⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Exegetical Statement

The sabbath was over at Sundown Saturday night. As permitted by Jewish Law, the women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James, and Salome) head out and buy the spices they will need to anoint Jesus' corpse, and thus honor Him in death in the way they desire but could not since He was buried just as the Sabbath began. Then they wait until the crack of dawn and head out to the tomb, not even considering until they are almost there who will roll the huge stone away. But to their astonishment it has been already rolled away. As they enter the find someone who by all appearances appears to be a young man (who we know to be an angel) sitting inside the tomb, clothed in a white stole (long robe worn by men of that day). And since this is not what they expected to see they are out of their minds with astonishment. So He proceeds to speak to them telling them to stop being thus astonished! "You are here looking for Jesus of Nazareth's corpse, His body thus remaining in it's crucified state. It is that way no longer! He has risen! He is not here! Look, this is the place where they laid Him on Friday at sundown. Now, stop looking for Him here. Go at once, tell His disciples, tell Peter. Tell them He is going before them to Galilee, and they will see Him for themselves there." But these ladies have been seized by a trembling fear and a bewildering sense of shock. When the exit the tomb they flee. And they speak of none of these events to anyone, for you know they were terrified at that time.

Focus Statement:

While the ladies did nothing, Jesus filled in for their inactivity. In numerous ways described in 1 Corinthians 15:15:3-8 He appeared to confirm His resurrection over and over to people who struggled at first to believe. He came to give them His firsthand witness that He fulfilled all the Gospel promises He had preached to them. He comes to us in Word and Sacrament and confirms them to us. He invites us to join in the wonder and joy of His resurrection through our worship today

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

While we are not seized by trembling fear or astonishment that makes us out of our minds with wonder, we react to the Easter morning Gospel story just as these women did. We leave with a smile on our faces and say nothing to no one. Instead of being motivated by terror, we are motivated by the lack of a sense of wonder and reverential fear toward what is the life changing moment in the life of every believer.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Renew our faith and understanding of the victory of His resurrection, and what the Gospel explains it means to us. Then go as commanded and share that message, knowing that when we fail, Jesus extends the same love and forgiveness that He did to sinful denying Peter.

Subject Sentence: Be amazed at His resurrection, moved to go and tell!

Introduction: A Very Uncomfortable Ending

I have a plot line for a movie I want to make. It begins with a leading cancer researcher walking into his office after a long day in the lab. He's feeling defeated because his latest work on preventing several types of cancer has not panned out. He walks in with his head down without even looking up. As he goes to grab his coat he does look up, and there is someone seated at his desk. He is startled by the appearance of anyone in his office because the door was locked when he came in, he had to use his key to open it.

The man is dressed in the same kind of lab coat that he wears. There is something slightly unnerving about this man, but at the same time not threatening. He has a kind yet excited smile on his face. The doctor asks in a slightly trembling voice, "Who are you?" The young man answers, "I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but I'm here from the future." And I have a present for you, something of great importance." He has a twinkle in his eye as he says this. He produces a manilla folder and sets it down on the researcher's desk. He tells the researcher, "This is the cure for all types of cancer. With this information you will be able to create an inoculation which will not only prevent people from ever getting cancer but will cure those that already are suffering from cancer, even those in the late stages of the disease." And after saying this the young man disappears right before the researcher's eyes.

The researcher stands there shocked and in awe. He is trying to figure out if what he just experienced is real or was some kind of vision caused by the stress of the day. He thinks to himself "Perhaps I hallucinated the whole thing." But yet there is the envelope right there on his table. He walks over and picks it up, briefly looking inside. He sees papers with a scientific formula for creating some kind of compound. Fearing that he is going insane he quickly puts the papers back in the envelope, drops them on his desk, and leaves his office locking the door behind him. He leaves the building and heads home, saying not a word to anyone about what had just happened. The end.

What do you think? That's a great plot line, isn't it? Don't you like how it ended? Now if you are honest, it's a pretty terrible ending, isn't it? In some respects, so is how our Gospel Reading ends.

Our Gospel Reading and It's Very Uncomfortable Ending

Our Gospel reading ends with **Mark 16:8 And they (Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome) went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**” Now set aside what we know from the other Gospel accounts, as well as the rest of Mark Chapter 16 that we have in our Bibles. We know from the other Gospel accounts as well as our Epistle Lesson today how this true story ends. So, why would those who decide what portions of Scripture should be read on this particular Easter Sunday have us stop here? It makes for a very unsatisfactory ending to this account of Jesus’ resurrection. And while there are other considerations that would make for another sermon at another time, I want to focus on a point being made here. There is something that we need to consider with this ending. There is a message for you and me in it from the LORD.

Our Gospel account in Mark begins at Sundown on Saturday evening, when the Sabbath had officially ended. At this time it was now permissible for the women in our story to do what they could not do earlier, go out and buy the spices needed to anoint Jesus’ corpse. Then they waited until the crack of dawn Sunday morning to head out and complete this task, anointing His corpse for burial. It was something that they would’ve done at the time he was put in the tomb on Friday, but they ran out of time since the Sabbath had begun at sundown. It’s not until they’ve almost arrived at the tomb that they give any thoughts to the huge stone that stands at the entrance. It would take a number of strong men to roll it back, it’s certainly more than they can handle.

But even as they discuss this problem they look up and find there actually is no problem at all. The stone has been removed, yet there’s no one present who could’ve done such a thing. This state of affairs would’ve been somewhat disquieting by itself, but there is more to come. They enter the tomb expecting to find the corpse of a crucified man. But there is no corpse! Instead, there is a young man in a long flowing brilliantly white robe sitting where Jesus’ corpse should’ve been. Now they are greatly astonished at what they find, almost to the point where they are wondering if they are losing their minds!

This young man, who we know to be an angel, speaks to them, “Stop being astonished and alarmed! You’re looking for the crucified corpse of Jesus of Nazareth, Well, as you can see, it’s not here, because He is not here! He has risen! Just look here, look at the place where they laid His body on Friday evening. And now that you have seen, stop looking for Him here. Instead go, right now! Go and tell His Disciples, go and tell Peter. Tell them what you have seen and heard. Tell them He is already heading to Galilee and they will see Him there with their own eyes, just as He promised them before He was crucified.”

Now, these women have stopped being astonished. Now they are seized with a great panic. They are terrified. **Mark 16:8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.** Consider what exactly they have seen, and what it means. Consider how they reacted. Consider that they said nothing to anyone, not a soul did they tell.

The Message They Have To Tell

And what is it they have to tell? More than just that Jesus' body is not in the tomb. That HE HAS BEEN RAISED! Just like all the rest of His Passion predictions about His suffering and death had come true, His promise that He would be raised from the dead had also come true. And it opens the door to understanding many of the other things He had told them that they didn't have the context to understand.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus was acting as the Greatest of Shepherd for they who were His flock, His sheep. Rather than His death being defeat and the hands of His enemies, it was Him giving what was most precious, His life for them.

John 14:1-4 ¹"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going." His death was His going to prepare a place for them. They have proved themselves time and again unable to earn such a wonderful gift as eternal life. They doubt, they run, they deny Him. So He went to the cross to do what they never could, prepare a place for them in eternal life by sacrificing Himself so that they could be declared good enough to live with Him forever. And now He had come back from death so that they might know what He had done and where they now stand. And as He would go on to tell them in person, He will one day return to take all His flock to live with Him forever.

John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. He is the way. He is the Savior. His death and resurrection is the truth that we who believe in hang our eternity on by faith. There is no other way, no other name by which we can have life with Him now and eternal life to come, except by faith in Him.

And what exactly does the faith consist of? **John 3:14-17 ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.** Our faith consists of seeing Jesus lifted up on the cross as the gift from God that heals our sin-stricken hearts, in a similar way but even

greater fashion than Moses' serpent on the pole healed the Israelites who suffered from poisonous snakes. It is believing that Jesus' is God's gift of love for the entire world, all of humanity. Therefore if you believe that His suffering, death, and resurrection was done to save you, to forgive your sins, save you from God's wrath you justly deserve, and from the grip of the devil, then you shall not perish but Have everlasting life. And how is it you can believe such a grand and glorious thing? By the Spirit who is present with these very words, present to grant you the free gift of faith, by which you and I have and hold the truth these verses speak.

That's quite a message isn't it. With all that on the line this Gospel does end on a very unsatisfactory note, one that is even greater than my story of the doctor ignoring the cure for cancer.

We React In a Similar Fashion to Jesus Followers

But let's not be too hard on these ladies, or the Disciples who eventually do hear yet still do nothing. They don't even head to Galilee but stay locked in their Upper Room for fear of the Jewish authorities. They fear they might be next. Let's not be too hard on them because for a different reason we are just as bad.

We hear the Easter resurrection story every year. Having the whole story laid out in front of us it's understandable that we don't react with astonishment, or trembling fear. Instead, our reaction is sometimes complacency. Yep, thank you Jesus for taking care to the suffering and dying for me, I appreciate it very much. What time is Easter dinner? And at the worst it's a tuning out since we've heard it all before. Either way how many times do we leave here to join with family and friends who don't bother to come here and hear the story retold as you have, or don't care about it, or don't believe a word of it. It's the true story that should move us to action, to go and tell. And yet like Jesus followers in our Gospel we say nothing to anyone.

Jesus Forgives our inaction and Encourages Us

But that didn't stop Jesus. He didn't just leave His resurrection Gospel to languish in obscurity. He came to His Disciples personally and kept on coming. Paul in our Epistle Lesson gives us a summary of Jesus resurrection appearances. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 **³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.** None of these merited Jesus' dogged persistence, yet He kept coming to them anyway. We don't merit His continued coming to us, yet He does so anyway. He does so with the same

love and for the same reason. To turn our sinful selfish hearts and minds from ourselves and back to Him. Where we encounter His great love and forgiveness. Even for those who should go and tell but don't. Even for you and for me.

Conclusion

My plot line for my movie had a terrible ending, and there is no way anyone would ever make a movie of it. Our Gospel Reading has a likewise unsatisfactory ending. Perhaps the reason is God is using it to cure our inaction. He tells us that the witnesses to the resurrection told no one what they have seen. But you through the eyes of Scripture have seen. Now, what are you going to do? Out of His great love and mercy for us and the whole world Jesus makes sure that this is not how the story ended. He gave His life on the cross for all men. He desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And so He keeps coming to us, even today. He comes to us in His Word and His Sacrament, filling our hearts with faith and love and grace. He wants to renew within you the wonder of His death and resurrection. That is the purpose of these three interconnected services on Mandy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. He wants to move you to believe, then Go and Tell. And when you don't, He forgives you through that same death and resurrection. And in doing so, renews His call to Go and Tell. And so I proclaim to you: **"Alleluia! Christ is Risen. Amen.**